

Stalking

Data from the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey, a series of telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 8,000 U.S. women and 8,000 U.S. men about their experiences as victims of various forms of violence (including intimate partner violence), indicates that stalking by intimates is more prevalent than previously thought. The survey defines stalking as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that involves repeated (two or more occasions) visual or physical proximity; nonconsensual communication; verbal, written, or implied threats; or a combination thereof, that would cause a reasonable person harm. Almost 5% of surveyed women and 0.6% of surveyed men reported being stalked by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or date at some time in their lifetime. (Tjaden, P. and N. Thoennes. July 2000. *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence*, NCJ 181867. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)

Of those surveyed individuals who reported being stalked by such a partner in the previous twelve months, 0.5% were women and 0.2% were men. (Ibid.)

Annually in the United States, 503,485 women and 185,496 men are stalked by an intimate partner. (Ibid.)

Approximately one-half of stalking incidents perpetrated against female respondents by intimates were reported to the police. (Ibid.)

Based on analyses of the NVAW Survey, prevalence rates of cyberstalking roughly estimate that 8.2 million women will be stalked at some point during their lifetime,

and 1% of women have been stalked during the preceding twelve months. (*Cyberstalking: A New Challenge for Law Enforcement and Industry, A Report from the Attorney General to the Vice President*. August 1999.)

Data from a survey of randomly chosen college students, using a definition of stalking as "repeated and obsessive behavior that made you afraid or concerned for your safety," found 156.5 incidents of stalking per 1,000 female students and 130.7 victims per 1,000 female students. (Fisher, B. and F. Cullen. 1999. *The Extent and Nature of the Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.)

With respect to stalking behavior in the above-cited survey, 42% of stalkers followed the victim; 52% of stalkers waited outside or inside places; 44% of stalkers watched from afar; 78% telephoned; 31% sent letters; and 25% e-mailed the victim. (Ibid.)

Seventy-three percent of the victims had taken some action in response to the stalking, including: avoidance or attempt at avoidance of stalker (43.2%); no acknowledgement of messages or e-mails (8.8%); improved residential security system (4.1%); began traveling with a companion (3.9%); and filing of a grievance or initiated disciplinary action with university (3.3%). (Ibid.)

Researchers estimated that about one-third of stalking victims reported they had sought psychological treatment. In addition, one-fifth lost time from work, and 7% of those never returned to work. (National Institute of Justice. November 1997. "The Crime of Stalking: How Big is the Problem?" *Bulletin*, citing The National Violence Against Women Survey, sponsored by National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)